

*A most Learned and Eloquent* SPEECH, *spoken or delivered in the Honourable House of Commons at Westminster, by the most Learned Lawyer* MILES CORBET, Esq; Recorder of Great Yarmouth, *and Burgess of the same, on the 31<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1647. taken in Shorthand by Nocky, and Tom. Dunn, his Clerks, and revised by John Tayler.*

*Mr. Speaker,*  
**I** Know not how to speak, I know no Man weaker than my self, who do acknowledge, I am as unfitting to speak in this Honourable Assembly, as *Phormio* was to prattle an Oration of War's Discipline to the great Soldier *Hannibal*, in the presence of King *Antiochus*; yet out of the debility of my Knowledge, the inability of my Learning, the imbecility of my Judgment, the Nobility of this conscript Senate, the mutability of their Censures, the instability of Opinions, the probability of Offending, the volubility of Scandal, and the impotency of my Utterance, I have (maugre all these perillous Impediments) adventured to unbosom and disburthen my Mind before these unmatched Patriots.

*Mr. Speaker,* I am not ignorant that you are appointed in this Parliament to be the Ear of this Kingdom, and Mouth of the Commons; and I desire that your Hearing may not take any offence against my Words, nor your Tongue to retort me a Reproof, instead of an Applause.

*Mr. Speaker,* In my Introduction to Grammar (vulgarly called *The Accidence*) I found eight parts of Speech, which is now an Introduction to me to divide my Speech into eight parts; that is to say,

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| 1. <i>What we have done for Religion.</i>   | 5. <i>What for the Kingdom.</i> |
| 2. <i>What we have done for the Church.</i> | 6. <i>What for the Subject.</i> |
| 3. <i>What for the King.</i>                | 7. <i>What for Reformation.</i> |
| 4. <i>What for the Laws.</i>                | 8. <i>What for our selves.</i>  |

Of all these in order, as my infirm Loquacity can demonstrate.



*Mr. Speaker*, I do not herein declare, either or neither the Opinions of this honourable Assembly, or any Fancy of my own, but I will make plain unto you, how the Malignants esteem of us, and into what *odium* we are fallen amongst foreign Nations.

First, for *Religion*: They say we have thrust out one Religion, and taken in two: That we have thrown down *Protestantism*, and erected *Anabaptism* and *Brownism*: That by our Doctrines we do abuse the famous Memory of Queen *Elizabeth*, King *James*, and consequently King *Charles*: That in their Religions they were Papistically minded, (which their Lives and Acts have and do manifest the contrary) and they say, it is no less than odious, and high Treason, to traduce either of those deceased or surviving Princes, with such false and scandalous Aspersions.

*Mr. Speaker*, I would not be mistaken; I say not my own words, but I say, what the Malignants say of my Lord *Say*, and of us: They say, That the Protestant Religion was wont to be (and ought) an *inward* Robe or Vestment, for the Souls and Consciences of all true Believers; and that the Bishops, ancient Fathers, and all Orthodox Divines, had a care to keep her neat, clean, and handsom, in as spotless Integrity as a Militant Church in this imperfect Age could keep it. But they say, that we have made Religion an *outward* Garment, or a Cloak, which none do wear amongst us, but Sectaries, Fools, Knaves, and Rebels. They say, this Cloak, being with often turning, worn as Threadbare as the public Faith, full of wrinkles, spots, and stains, neither brushed, spunged, nor made clean, with as many Patches in it, as in a Begger's Coat, kept by Cobblers, Weavers, Ostlers, Tinkers, and Tub-preachers; so that all order, and decent comeliness, is thrust out of the Church; all laudable Ornaments trod down and banished, under the false and scandalous terms of Popery; and in the place thereof, most nasty, filthy, and loathsome beastliness, our Doctrines being vented in long tedious Sermons, to move and stir up the People to Rebellion; and traitorous Contributions, to exhort them to Murder, Rapine, Robbery, and Disloyalty, and all manner of mischief that may be, to the confusion of their Souls and Bodies.

All these damnable Villanies, our Adversaries say, are the accursed Fruits which our new moulded Linsey-wolsey Religion hath produced; for they say, our Doctrine is neither derived from the Old, or New Testament: That all the Fathers, Protestant Doctors, and Martyrs, never heard of any such; that Christ, and his Apostles, never knew it; and for the Book of *Common-Prayer*, they say in Verse:

Ten thousand such as we, can ne're devise,  
A Book so good as that which we despise;  
The *Common-Prayer* they mean: If we should sit  
Ten thousand Years with all our Brains and wit,  
We should prove Coxcombs all; and in the end,  
Leave it as 'tis, too good for us to mend.

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And so much they say we have done for *Religion*, which is the first of my eight parts of Speech; and as my weakness and your patience will permit, I will more briefly and compendiously proceed to the second.

Secondly, we are taxed with profane and barbarous Pollutions of the *Church*, or *Houses*, dedicated to God's Service: They say, that we never built any, but have taken too much accursed pains to deface, and pull down many, perverting the right use of them into Stables, receptacles of Strumpets, luxurious Villains, and infernal stinking Smoaks of Mundungo at the Communion Table, destroying those things, which we with great maturity of Judgment, Learning, and Wisdom, set in order, enacted by former Parliaments, most execrably spoiling all by the usurped Power and Protection of this Parliament.

*Mr. Speaker*, It is a rigorous Medicine for the Toothach to knock out the Brains of the Patient; he is no wise Man that takes violent Physic and kills himself, to purge a little Phlegm, nor is he a prudent Builder, if his House wants some slight repairs, will pull it down: A Man that loves his Wife, will not put her away for a few needless black Patches that her Face is disfigured withall. In like manner, if any thing were amiss, either Ornament, Gesture, Ceremony, Liturgy, or whatsoever might have been approved unfitting, scandalous, or justly offensive, it is conceived it might have been removed, or reconciled, in a more Christian way than by ruining, demolishing, tearing, and violently defacing all, without regard of Humanity, Christianity, or Order, either from God or Man, as too many places in this unjointed Kingdom can most truly and wofully testify. And these sweet pieces of Service (our Adversaries say) we have done for the Church.

Thirdly, concerning our *Loyalty*, and *Obedience* to the King; It is manifest, that we have all taken the Oath of Allegiance to His Majesty, and that we have also lately taken Oaths and Covenants to make War against him: Our Enemies would fain know, who had power to dispense or free us from the former Oath, and likewise by what Authority the latter Covenants and Oaths were imposed upon the Consciences of Men. For my own part, if there were none wiser than my self, this ambiguous *Enigma* would never be unriddled. But it is reported, that if we had kept our first Oaths conscientiously, and not taken the second most perniciously, and performed them so impiously, then we had never so rebelliously opposed and offended so gracious a Majesty.

*Mr. Speaker*, Our Adversaries do further alledge, That our *Obedience* to His Majesty is apparently manifest by many strange ways: We have disburthened him of his large Revenues, we have eased him of the charge of Royal House-keeping, we have freed him of paying of his Navy, we have cleared him from either repairing of, (or repairing to) his stately Pallaces, magnificent Mansions, and defensive Castles and Garrisons, we have put him out of care for reparations of his Armories, Arms, Ammunition, and Artillery, we have been at the cost of keeping his Children, and most trusty Servants from or for him, we have taken Order, and given Ordinances, that he shall not be troubled with



much Money or Meat; and that his Queen and lawful Wife shall not so much as darken his Door. And we have endeavoured by open Rebellion, to release him of a most troublesome Life and Reign, by hunting him like a *Partridge over the Mountains*; and by shooting Bullets of all sizes at his *Person* for His Majesty's Preservation, on purpose to make him a glorious King in another World. We have eased him of a great number of his faithful Friends, loyal Subjects and Servants, by either charitable Famine, brotherly Banishment, liberal and free Imprisonment, Parliamentary Plunder, friendly Throat-cutting, and unlawful Beheading and Hanging, or ruining as many as we could lay hands on, that either loved, served, or honoured him.

All these heavy Burthens we have eased him of, and overladen ourselves with the usurped Ponderosity of them; so that our Adversaries say, that the weight of them will either break our Backs, our Necks, or sink us for ever: And they say, that since the World's Creation, never so good a King had so bad Subjects to use him so hardly.

Fourthly, *Mr. Speaker*, It is questioned what we have done for the *Laws*: There are some that are not afraid to say, That we have transformed or metamorphosed the *Common Laws* of this Land, into the Land's common Calamities; that instead of the common Benefit which the *Laws* in Community should yield to all Men in general, we have perverted those *Laws* to the private profit of our selves, and some other particular persons. The *Civil Law* is turned into an uncivil Civil War, Blasphemy, Atheism, Sacrilege, Obscenities, Profaneness, Incest, Adultery, Fornication, Bigamy, Polygamy, Bastard-bearing, Cuckold-making, and all sorts of beastly Bawdry is so far from being punished, that it is generally connived and winked at, or tolerated by us. And those which should be the Punishers of these gross and crying Crimes, as Judges, Officials, Deacons, Proctors, and other Officers, these are derided, reviled, libelled against, cryed down, and made a common Scoffing-stock of every libidinous incontinent Whore, and Whoremonger.

The *Law of God* contained in the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, we have rased out of the Church, not so much as suffering them to be read: And the *New Commandment*, which was the last that Christ commanded, *That we should love one another*, we have turned that the foul contrary way, to the spoiling and murdering one another. The *Law of Nature* is most unnaturally changed to brutish, heathenish, devilish, barbarous Inhumanity; Parricide, Fratricide, and Homicide, hath been and is by us defended, maintained, and rewarded; no Affinity, Consanguinity, Alliance, Friendship, or Fellowship, hath or can secure any true Protestant, or loyal Subject, either of his Life or Goods, Safety or Freedom. These are the best Reports our Adversaries the Malignant Party do give us.

It is farther said, That we have infringed and violated the *Law of Arms* here, and the *Law of Nations* abroad; For whereas Messengers and Ambassadors have always had, and ought to have free and safe passage, with fair and courteous Accommodation and Entertainment, with the *Turkes, Tartars, Jews, and Cannibals*, always observed most

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obsequiously and punctually : But we contrary to them, and repugnant to *Christianity*, have suffered Ambassadors to be rifled, robb'd, and evil entreated. And we have caused His Majesty's Messengers to be hang'd, whom he hath most graciously sent to us with Conditions of Peace.

By the *Vox populi*, or common Vote of those People, we are pleased to call Malignants, Papists, Enemies to the *State*, with other Scandals and Epithites, (which they utterly deny both in their words and practice :). We are justly taxed to be the main Incendiaries, and pestilent Propagators, of all the Mischiefs which this afflicted miserable Kingdom groans and bleeds under ; for they say, That the old Statutes of *Magna Charta* are overthrown by us, under pretence and colour of supporting them : And that by our Votes, Ordinances, Precepts, Proclamations, Edicts, Mandates, and Commands, we have countermanded, abrogated, annihilated, abolished, violated, and made void, all the Laws of God, of *Nature*, of *Arms*, and of *Arts* too ; and instead of them, we have unlawfully erected *Marshal Law*, *Club Law*, *Stafford Law*, and such lawless *Laws* as make most for Treason, Rebellion, Murder, Sacrilege, Ruine, and Plunder. But as for the King himself, we have not allowed him so much *Law* as a Huntsman allows a Hare. These are our Enemies words, and so much they say we have done for the *Laws*.

Fifthly, *Mr. Speaker*, This Question or Query is, what we have done for the *Kingdom* : It is said, that we have *done* and *undone* the *Kingdom* ; this ancient famous flourishing *Kingdom* ; this Envy of the World for Happiness ; this *Eden* of the Universe ; this Terrestrial *Paradise* ; this Abstract of Heaven's Blessings, and Earthly Content ; this Epitome of Nature's Glory ; this exact Extract of Piety, Learning, and magnanimous Chivalry ; this Nursery of Religion, Arms, Arts, and laudable Endeavours ; this Breed of Men ; this wonder of Nations, formerly renowned, feared, loved, and honoured, as far as ever Sun and Moon shined ; this *England* which hath been a Kingdom, and a Monarchy, many hundred years, under the Reigns of 168 Kings and Queens ; this Kingdom which hath conquered Kingdoms ; that hath *India*, *Syria*, *Palestina*, *Cyprus*, Tributary tremblers ; that hath made *France* shake, and *Spain* quake ; that relieved and defended *Scotland* from *French* slavery, and saved and protected the *Netherlands* from *spanish* Tyranny. Now have we made this *Kingdom*, this *England*, a miserable Slave to it self, an Universal *Golgotha*, a purple Gore, *Acheldama* a Field of Blood, a *Gehenna*, a Den of Thieves or Infernal Furies, and finally an Earthly Hell, were it not for this difference, That *here* the best Men are punished, and in *Hell* only the worst are plagued ; here no good Man escapes Torment, nor any bad Man is troubled : The King is abused for being good and just, and his true and loyal Subjects and Servants are ruined and massacred for their Fidelity. The *Protestants* are called *Papists*, because they will not be *Brownists*, *Anabaptists*, and Rebels : And our Adversaries are so bold to say, That we have plotted and laboured long to turn this glorious Monarchy into a pedling roly poly *Independant* Anarchy ; and make this *Kingdom* to be no *Kingdom* ; and so much we have done for this *Kingdom*.



Sixthly, *Mr. Speaker*, They do question us what good we have done for the *benefit* or *liberty* of the *subject*: Many of them say, that they know too well and too ill, what and what not, they find (by lamentable experience) that we have turned their *Liberty* into Bondage, their Freedom into Slavery, and their Happiness into an unexampled Infelicity. Nay, it is reported, that we have found two ways to Hell, which are, either to be Rebels, or perjured, to fight in Person against the King, and to be forsworn by a Covenant to owe him no Obedience, or dutiful Allegiance: They say we say, Tush, these are but Trifles, which may be answered at an easie rate, a small matter will clear this Reckoning; it is no more than everlasting Damnation, for which, *Mr. Speaker*, I am bold to make use of a Speech in the distastful Litany, *Good Lord deliver us.*

The Malignants do compare this *Commonwealth* to an old Kettle, with here and there a fault or hole, a crack or a flaw in it; and that we (in imitation of our worthy Brethren of *Banbury*) were intrusted to mend the said Kettle; but like deceitful and cheating Knaves, we have, instead of stopping one hole, made three or four score; for the People chose us to ease them of some mild and tolerable Grievances, which we have done so artificially, that they all cry and complain, that the Medicine is forty times worse than the Disease, and the Remedy a hundred times worse than the Medicine. And so much is reported that we have done for the *Subject*.

Seventhly, *Mr. Speaker*, The Malignants Query or Question is, what we have done for *Reformation*: What by our industrious Care, and long Sitting, we have Reformed; how the Service of God is by us more religiously, sincerely, zealously, fervently, and ardently, preached or practiced; what we have amended either in Church or Kingdom; how either the King is more honoured or obeyed than he was before this Parliament; what good we have done this four or five years; with what faces can we look upon the Freeholders and Corporations in every Shire, County, City, Town, and Borough in this Kingdom, who cried us up, and with their Voices elected us to be *Knights* and *Burgesses*, which way we can answer the same, for our many breaches of that great Trust which they intrusted us withal? I tell you, *Mr. Speaker*, these are home Questions; and they plainly say, that all our Reformation is Nonconformation; and by sure confirmation, true information, certain affirmation, we have by cunning Transformation turned all to Deformation: So that if our Predecessors and Ancestors that are departed this Life (to a better or a worse) should or could rise out of their Graves, and see the change, alteration, and unmannerly Minners, that have overspread this Church and Kingdom, they would think they were not in *England*, but either in *Turky*, *Barbaria*, *Scythia*, *Tartaria*, or some Land that is inhabited by *Infidels* or *Pagans*; for *England* (as it is) looks no more like *England* (as it was five years ago) than a Camel or Cockle shell are like an Owl or a Red Herring.



Eighthly and lastly, briefly and compendiously, the Question is, what we have done for *our selves*: We have run the hazard of our Estates to be justly forfeited by Rebellion, against a just, merciful, and truly religious King; our Lives are liable to the rigour of such Laws as former Parliaments have enacted against Rebels and Traitors; and our selves are in danger of perpetual Perdition, if submission, contrition, and satisfaction, be not humbly and speedily performed or endeavoured; for we (and none but we) have altered this Kingdom's Felicity to Confusion and Misery; from a pleasant merry Comedy, to a dismal bloody Tragedy, sufficient to fill a large History of perpetual Memory of us and our Posterity.

And thus, *Mr. Speaker*, have I with as much brevity as I could, run over my Eight parts of Speech, whereby may be perceived, how the Malignant Adversaries do esteem of us and our Actions. I could speak more than I have said, and I could say more than I have spoken; but having done, I hold it discretion to make an

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